

**Federal Ministry of
Education, Science
and Culture**

**AUSTRIA
State of Implementation of the
Bologna Objectives**

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Any gender-related terms refer to both men and women.



Europe is as complex as her member states, irrespective of their international affiliations. This complexity also means diversity and applies to all sectors and aspects of human life. Higher education is one of them, for the future of our continent it is among the most important ones.

Ever since the so-called “Bologna Declaration” was signed in 1999, students, teachers, and staff at higher education institutions as well as political decision makers have been working together in the transformation of European universities.

The signatories have undertaken commitments to reform their own national higher education systems, whilst respecting the fundamental principles of autonomy and diversity of the institutions which are part of the respective system. New countries have taken up the aims of the Bologna Declaration, so that the principles laid down therein are implemented in many more countries than in the signatory countries already now.

The Bologna Declaration invites the higher education community all over Europe to contribute to the success of the process of reform and convergence to make Europe more attractive and competitive.

This brochure provides an overview of the state of implementation of the Bologna Process in Austria. Be it the introduction of the two tier system, be it the implementation of ECTS or of the diploma supplement, be it the promotion of mobility, be it quality assurance – the initiatives are manifold.

Whereas the necessary legal measures are prepared by the ministries and the parliament, the realization of the aims of the Bologna Declaration lies with the individual higher education institutions and all their staff and students. This cooperation between policy makers, higher education institutions and students is at the heart of the “Bologna Process”.

Together, let us make the most out of it during the forthcoming years!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Gehrer".

Elisabeth Gehrer
Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture

Introduction

In order to set the stage for the efficient and smooth implementation of the Bologna objectives, the following measures were taken:

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture initiated a **monitoring project** for the higher education sector to follow the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration. The first report was finalized at the end of 2001 and is available on the **Austrian Bologna-website** - <http://www.bologna.at> - in English and in German.

The next report will cover a 2-year period (2002/2003) and will be available in 2004.

A **national Bologna follow-up group** consisting of representatives of the responsible ministries and authorities, as well as representatives of the higher education sector (e.g. Rectors' Conference, *Fachhochschule* Conference, Teacher Training Colleges' Conference, the Austrian Students' Union) was established in 1999. The national follow-up group is - among other things - responsible for the preparation of the Austrian contribution to the European follow-up process and for the elaboration of the Austrian position for the Ministers' conferences, and ensures the flow of information within Austria.

All Austrian universities and nearly all of the Fachhochschulen have by now nominated a **Bologna Coordinator** who is responsible for promoting the implementation of the Bologna objectives in his/her institution.

The above-mentioned Austrian Bologna website -- <http://www.bologna.at> -- was set up in 2001 to provide information on the developments in Austria and to disseminate information on the developments and events at the European level.

UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITIES OF THE ARTS

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Among many other objectives of the Bologna Declaration, the introduction of the diploma supplement is foreseen in the **Federal Act on the Organisation of the Universities and their Studies (Universities Act 2002: <http://www.weltklasse-uni.at/index5.php>)**.

A decree regulating the implementation entered into force in August 2002, which means, that since October 2003, all universities issue the **diploma supplement** in German and English to every graduate upon his/her request. Moreover, universities may also choose to issue it in an additional language.

Adoption of a system based on two cycles

Bachelor programmes at Austrian universities and universities of the Arts started in 2000/01, which means that the **first bachelors have graduated this very year**. Up to now about **180 individual bachelor programmes** have been adopted and/or have been running at Austrian Universities and Universities of the Arts.

The aim is to offer at least 50% of all fields of studies as bachelor and master study programmes by 2006. Newly introduced study programmes must follow the bachelor/master pattern. It is **not** possible to run a programme both as a diploma (old system) and a bachelor/master programme.

Establishment of a system of credits

The implementation of **ECTS** has been compulsory for bachelor/master studies since 1999 and for diploma studies (old system) since October 2002 (Universities Act 2002). 50% of all fields of studies should be covered by 2003. The Graz University of Technology, for instance, has a fully working ECTS system already. (<http://www.cis.tugraz.at/awa/ects.html>)

Promotion of mobility -- students and graduates

Apart from a variety of financial aid measures for needy students (see "Social dimension" below), an **extensive range of scholarship programmes** is available for students and graduates alike (e.g. Central European Exchange programme for University Studies - CEEPUS, Austro-Hungarian Exchange Programme, Austro-Czech Exchange Programme, Austro-Slovak Exchange Programme, grants for postgraduate programmes in non-German-speaking countries, national top-ups for ERASMUS-grants, etc).

For their study periods spent abroad in transnational, EU, government or university mobility programmes, outgoing students do not pay tuition fees at their Austrian home university. The same is true for students coming to Austria in the framework of such programmes.

Besides, there is a legal **guarantee of academic recognition** of study abroad periods, agreed upon between the student and the university in advance, by way of a so-called "*Vorausbescheid*".

University teachers

The new employment law for university teachers will make it easier for teachers to spend some time abroad for teaching and research purposes. Thus, the contract of employment can now be extended by up to 5 years for leaves of absence comprising the above-mentioned activities (under certain circumstances up to 10 years).

Besides, international experience is a prerequisite for appointments as university professors.

Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

The evaluation decree of 1997 introduced quality assurance measures at universities. In 2000 an accreditation law was passed for private universities. The Universities Act 2002 foresees a new relationship between the state and universities which is governed by full legal autonomy, performance-based contracts and management structures. This will add a factor of accountability and, consequently, quality control.

The Austrian Rectors' Conference, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the *Fachhochschule*-sector and the Austrian Student Union have been cooperating in a working group for the establishment of an **Austrian agency for quality assurance** since December 2002. The group has been charged with outlining the organisation and tasks of the agency and prepare its implementation, which is planned for October 2003. The quality assurance agency will be established as a body of private law that will be independent from government as well as from individual institutions. It will offer its services to the whole tertiary sector. On the international level the agency will co-operate with other quality assurance agencies and networks and specifically will seek to join the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education-ENQA. It is projected that the agency shall have two major functions, which are to be kept distinct from another. On the one hand, the agency will offer a meta certification of quality assurance mechanisms at institutional level, thus recognizing that quality management is primarily a responsibility of the institutions. Secondly, it will offer administrative and organisational support for evaluation projects as well as general advice and information on all aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

Activities in this field include the development of joint curricula for modules and university courses with a "European content", as well as **joint and double degrees** ("double-degree programmes"). If such a programme fulfills certain prerequisites, the Universities Act 2002 also authorises Austrian universities to issue one joint diploma together with the partner institution(s). Special importance will be put on the value of the degrees awarded for such programmes (including aspects such as acceptance in the international academic and professional systems, quality assurance, and employability).

Six Austrian institutions (five university departments and one teacher training college) have been participating in the **Tuning Project**, the results of which are of significant relevance to the majority of Bologna action lines. The conclusions of the Austrian project participants and their experiences in areas such as the definition of generic and subject specific learning outcomes and competences and curriculum development was presented at an event organised by the Austrian Rectors' Conference in May 2002.

The Universities Act 2002 also paves the way for easier recognition of exams taken at other EU and EEA universities and provides for the introduction of special **PhD-programmes** (in addition to the present doctoral studies).

Social dimension

Support measures for needy students have been increased. Students receiving national grants who spend a study period abroad keep their national support for up to two years and can receive an extra grant to cover their additional expenses abroad. These students also receive a reimbursement for their tuition fees.

Performance-related grants were increased threefold at the beginning of the academic year 2001/02. Incentive grants are given to students for the preparation of scientific or artistic work, if they can submit the proof of excellent performance.

Further support measures include partial coverage of travel costs, scholarships for language courses, and child support if the study abroad period comes towards the end of the student's study programme or during a traineeship abroad. With the introduction of study fees in 2001/02 a reimbursement scheme (full reimbursement of study fees) for socially needy students was established.

Life Long learning

Life Long learning measures at the university include, a.o., streamlining curricula (shorter duration of study programmes), *Fachhochschule* programmes, the utilization of new media in teaching at universities and *Fachhochschulen*, as well as further training offers for university teachers. **Danube University Krems** is the first centre of further and postgraduate training for the university sector).

FACHHOCHSCHULEN

The Bologna process with its main goal of creating a European Area of Higher Education, is an important factor in the internationalisation of the Austrian *Fachhochschule*-sector, and subsequently, in increasing the competitiveness of its graduates. The following measures have already been taken or are in the planning stage:

Adoption of a system based on two cycles

With the amendment to the *Fachhochschule* Studies Act (*FHStG*), which became effective on May 1, 2002, the legal basis for introducing bachelor's and master's study programmes in the *Fachhochschule*-sector has been established. The first bachelor programmes will start in the academic year 2003/04; the first master programmes will start in the academic year 2004/05.

Establishment of a system of credits

According to the amendment to the *Fachhochschule* Studies Act (*FHStG*) of May 1, 2002, ECTS credit points are to be allocated to the individual courses of any study programme. The majority of those Austrian *Fachhochschulen* which have been in existence for more than four years have already introduced ECTS in order to facilitate the lively student and teacher exchange under the framework of Socrates.

Promotion of mobility – Students and graduates

The same offers as for university students apply to Austrian *Fachhochschule* students (e.g. financial aid for needy students, Central European Exchange programme for University Studies - CEEPUS, Austro-Hungarian Exchange Programme, Austro-Czech Exchange Programme, Austro-Slovak Exchange Programme, Postgraduate Programme for non-German-speaking universities, national top-ups for ERASMUS-students, etc).

The legal guarantee of academic recognition of study abroad periods, agreed upon between the student and the Fachhochschule, called “*Vorausankennung*”, ensures a smooth return of students after their studies abroad.

Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

The Austrian *Fachhochschule* Conference is a member of the EUA, ensuring active Austrian participation and contribution to discussions at all “Bologna Follow-up” joint seminars.

To enhance the European cooperation in the field of quality assurance, the *Fachhochschule* Council has been a member of the “European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)” and the “International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)” for several years now.

In 2002 the *Fachhochschule* Council joined the “**Joint Quality Initiative**”. The joint quality initiative is an informal network for quality assurance and accreditation of bachelor and master programmes in Europe.

In 2003 the *Fachhochschule* Council signed a cooperation agreement, by which accreditation organisations in Germany, Switzerland and Austria are aiming at the mutual recognition of their accreditation decisions. Similar aims, such as the achievement of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions, are pursued by the **European Consortium for Accreditation**, which was founded in June 2003. Original members in addition to the *Fachhochschule* Council are accreditation organizations from the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Spain and Norway.

The *Fachhochschule* Council has commissioned a research project on the internationalisation in the Austrian *Fachhochschule*-sector, which is to answer the principal question to what extent the institutions of the Austrian *Fachhochschulen* are prepared for joining the European Area of Higher Education. The results of the research project shall be discussed at a presentation in autumn 2003.

In 2002, the accreditation guidelines for bachelor’s, master’s, and diploma degree programmes were completely revised by the Fachhochschule Council. The qualification framework of Bachelor’s, Master’s and Diploma programmes are based on the Dublin descriptors.

The revised evaluation guidelines approved by the *Fachhochschule* Council in 2002 define the presentation of a strategic concept and operational measures in the field of internationalisation as a subject of institutional evaluation. International experts are involved in the evaluation procedure.

In order to stimulate the internationalisation process within the Austrian *Fachhochschule*-sector even more effectively, a special “**Committee for International Affairs**” has recently been set up by the Austrian *Fachhochschule* Conference. A broad representation of Austrian *Fachhochschulen* in this committee ensures an optimal flow of information and a coherent implementation of international programmes within the whole sector. As from the academic year 2003/04, a newly-designed na-

tional funding scheme, the ***FH GO(es International)*** programme is intended to provide support for special internationalisation efforts of individual *Fachhochschule* institutions. Its main focus will be on the implementation of internationalisation strategies as well as on the installation of efficient international offices.

Another amendment to the *Fachhochschule Studies Act*, which is being prepared for 2004, will provide for the delivering of Diploma-Supplements to all graduates of *Fachhochschule* programmes as well as for a legal basis for double-degree-programmes, based on an agreement between one or more Austrian *Fachhochschule* institutions and foreign educational institutions.

TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES

Austrian Teacher Training Colleges are tertiary institutions but do not yet have university-like status. They do not belong to the group of *Fachhochschulen* or *Universitäten*. However, in **1999 a federal law was passed** by the Austrian Parliament, stating that the government will create *Hochschulen für pädagogische Berufe (universities for teacher training)* within a period of 8 years. In this Act guiding principles for the establishment of such *Hochschulen* were laid down which are exactly in line with the Bologna Declaration Objectives, such as:

- The implementation of ECTS
- the strengthening of the European Dimension
- international mobility
- quality assurance

The Act also guarantees the recognition of study periods abroad.

The first degree which will be awarded will very likely be based on a three-year course structure.

The Bologna Declaration in general contributes considerably to the structural and organisational changes of the teacher training colleges, which are undergoing the process of their status change towards university-like institutions, a process which will be completed by 2007.

As far as the present implementation of the Bologna declaration is concerned, almost all teacher training colleges use **ECTS** and have meanwhile started work on the preparation of the diploma supplement for their degree courses. The **diploma supplement** has been issued to every graduate since June 2003.

Almost all teacher training colleges participate in the **student mobility and staff mobility** programmes and many colleges implement EU-funded curriculum projects and intensive programmes under the ERASMUS scheme. Thus they fulfill the aspect of student and staff mobility and their intensive and structured international cooperation with many European partner institutions considerably contributes to the strengthening of the European dimension in teacher training.

In most of the Austrian teacher training colleges quality systems for **evaluation** were first introduced between 1997 and 1999. Some of the college staff underwent specific training in evaluation; evaluation strategies were developed, and contact persons for evaluation were nominated. Some colleges continue to use the systems then introduced, some colleges have diversified, expanded and modified their **quality assurance** systems. The link-up with European quality assurance systems will be the next step. Preparatory measures for reaching this objective were introduced in the academic year 2002/03.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, is responsible for a number of secondary colleges for agriculture and forestry, and for the Agrarian Teacher and Consultant Training College.

The following measures are under discussion right now:

Introduction of a bachelor programme in agricultural pedagogics

The Programme is to be established at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna, and will be operated in cooperation with the Agrarian Teacher and Consultant Training College. ECTS will be used.

Introduction of a bachelor programme in the field of "beverage technology"

Both programmes are planned to start in October 2004.

ACADEMIES -- HEALTH PROFESSIONS

The medical-technical academies and the academies for midwifery are recognized post-secondary institutions offering study programmes with a duration of 6 semesters. The entrance qualifications are the same as the ones needed for university studies.

On the basis of the new curricula which are to be introduced shortly, **diploma supplements** will be issued.

Some of the academies already use **ECTS**. On the basis of the above-mentioned reform it is to be extended to all of the academies for health professions.

Students have been able to participate in the actions of the SOCRATES and LEONARDO programmes since the end of the 1990s. A reform of the legal framework for **mobility** is under way.

The results of a project on **quality assurance** in the field of medical services will be used in the reform of the academies for health professions.

MILITARY COLLEGES

Given the specific characteristics of military cooperation in Europe, there is naturally a "**European dimension**" in military college curricula.

There is a *Fachhochschule* programme in the field of "military leadership" which use **ECTS**.

Quality assurance takes place in the form of evaluations and cooperation programmes with the University of Vienna to train academic advisors for research projects.

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